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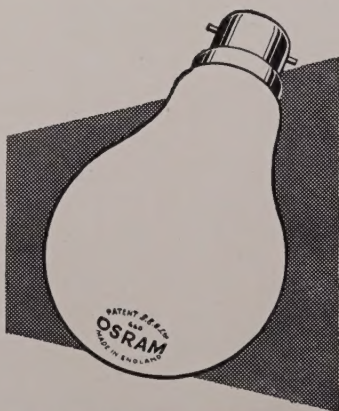


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# Early Travellers to New Zealand—I

by HECTOR BOLITHO

*Mr Bolitho, well known for his many books about the British Monarchy, is a New Zealander by birth and descent. A distinctive feature of early New Zealand settlement was that it included a high proportion of people closely associated with the literary life of their time: a subject on which Mr Bolitho, with John Mulgan, enlarged in *The Emigrants* (Selwyn and Blount, 1939). Some of these associations, and his adventures in tracing them, are described in this and a subsequent article*

WHEN I was a boy in New Zealand, my days were divided between a polite weather-boarded villa by the sea, and my uncle's mellow old farmhouse, which looked over fields where ostriches strutted and bullocks dozed in the heat of the brilliant sun. From early childhood my thoughts strayed from the harsh, colonial enterprises of the new country: some twist in myself made me shun the prospect of becoming a farmer. Although I had neither the solemn habits of thought, nor the learning to become an important scholar, my mind and imagination were happiest when released into the past.

My father, who was never warped by ambition, or aware of the value of unspent money, neglected his business and haunted the Auckland auction rooms. There was always a busy coming and going of objects in our house. He brought home bundles of old books—Shakespeare, Byron and Tennyson; Tolstoy, Turgeniev and Gorki; and Balzac—all of which I was allowed to read. I had already read *Madame Bovary* at an age when I should have been entranced by Peter Rabbit, Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail. I did not read Beatrix Potter until I was in my forties, but I had read *Casanova* when I was nineteen. While my muscular young contemporaries were galloping through the summer days, I was wandering through the Auckland Library and Art Gallery, looking at early folios of Shakespeare, brought to New Zealand in the 1840s, and at paintings of Thracians, riding splendidly along the sands.

The main thoroughfare in Auckland was Queen Street and the three New Zealand generations of my family could remember all its history. My grandmother had been born in the 1840s when Queen Street was a stream in the valley; she had crossed it on a wooden bridge. My mother could remember waving a flag there when the New Zealand soldiers embarked for the South African war. I was

born when Queen Street was already a flourishing, ugly canyon of concrete buildings, with electric trams running where the pleasant stream had once made its way from the hills to the sea.

One of the concrete buildings was a bank, in which I first learned the excitement of touching something old. One day a man behind the bank counter handed me a book, small enough to hold and read in one hand. It was one of Shakespeare's plays in a pocket edition and it had belonged to John Keats' friend, Charles Armitage Brown, who migrated to New Zealand in 1841. The man behind the counter said: "This belonged to my grandfather. He carried it in his pocket when he was tramping in the Lake country with Keats in 1818."

Next day I was seated at a long, polished table in the Auckland Library, with a pile of books beside me. I had begun, for the first time, the stimulating task of making the dead bones of history come to life, from the evidence of the written word.

Charles Brown was in his thirty-second year when he walked with Keats in the north of England and through the Highlands. Brown had already tried and failed as a business man, so he had turned to writing and had made £300 from the libretto of an opera produced at Drury Lane. He first met Keats in 1817 and their friendship soon became secure. "You have been living for others more than any man I know", Keats wrote to him some time later. "I had got into a habit of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties." As they travelled, "foot-ing slow across a silent plain", they worked, sometimes together. The ballad of *Meg Merrilies* was inspired by Brown's conversation, and they collaborated in writing *Otho the Great*; Brown outlined the plot, scene by scene, and Keats wrote the verses.

Charles Armitage Brown was also an



*The sketch of John Keats  
drawn by Charles Armitage  
Brown at Shanklin in 1819.*



*National Portrait Gallery*

artist and during a later summer when they were staying at Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight, he made a sketch of Keats which he afterwards took with him to New Zealand. Later experience has taught me that this is perhaps the best and most personal portrait ever made of the poet. Their friendship endured until Keats died in Rome, in 1821: the last known letter he wrote was to his friend. "I cannot answer anything in your letter . . . because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love as much as I do you . . . I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow. God bless you!"

Brown had begun another life before this. In 1817 he had married Abigail Donohue, an Irish servant, who soon faded from the story; it was their boy, "Carlino", who came to dominate Brown's future plans.

For some years Brown and his young son

lived in Italy, where Brown wrote a book on the autobiographical theme in Shakespeare's sonnets, and began a novel.

When his son was older Brown returned to England and lived at Plymouth. The choice of the port of Plymouth as his English home was propitious for Charles Armitage Brown. The Plymouth Company of New Zealand had been formed there and ships were being chartered to carry the first settlers to the Antipodes. *New Plymouth* had already been established, with a cluster of shanties, on the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand, and one of the pamphlets elaborating the charms of the young land fell into Brown's hands. It reminded him that "those ardent spirits which first led the way across the Atlantic" came

from Devon and Cornwall. Spirits of equal "vigour and grace" might go south and repeat the brave enterprise, in Australia and New Zealand. The pamphlet cast its spell; Charles Brown and his son decided to cross the world and settle in New Plymouth.

"I have bought land in New Zealand", Brown wrote to a friend, "with machinery to take thither, from pins and needles to a saw-mill and a steam-engine. . . Do not say I am too old for such an undertaking when I have his [Carlino's] young limbs and skill to aid me. He did not tempt me to go; it was my proposition to him, at first an unwilling listener. . . I go for his sake, not mine. . ."

Brown signed the brave letter "Chas. Brown, the emigrant."

The next document in the story is rather pathetic for its optimism. Brown wrote to his son, already on the high seas, telling him what he should do when he arrived in New



Plymouth. "Of course, you will choose, if possible in preference to all others, a section with a water-course for the mill. Next to that I prefer a town section with a boulevard in front of my own house. . ." Perhaps it was impossible, sitting in the safe room of his home in the *old* Plymouth, to imagine what the *New* Plymouth was like; a group of rude buildings, with tribes of valiant, cruel Maoris behind them, and the wild ocean in front.

Charles Armitage Brown's adventure ended in anger, sorrow and early death. His ship, the *Oriental*, arrived off New Plymouth on November 7, 1841. The pamphlet of the Plymouth Company of New Zealand had lied: Brown found that the only rich land was still covered by forest and that the beach landing was so dangerous that Sydney and Wellington merchants would not trade with the colonists. This talented man of fifty odd years, who had enjoyed the friendship of Keats and the company of Charles Dilke, Landor and Byron, who had stood beside Keats when they agreed that nothing in the world could equal the beauty of Lake Windermere, was suddenly plunged into a conglomeration of shacks and savages, at the other end of the world. He turned to bitterness: he brow-beat the Permanent Resident, he was described as being "ungentlemanly and insulting", and he finally proved his inability to shake off his Englishness by writing a letter to the editor of *The Times*. The letter was printed on August 31, 1842. "Should my health or strength permit me to survive the voyage, you will see me or hear of my return to England", Brown wrote. He followed with several pages of acid complaint and ended: "Make what use you please of this letter, bearing in mind that I wish it to be published in the papers as a warning to others. . ."

During the time the protest was travelling home to England, Brown became suddenly ill. He had been dead almost three months when his letter was published.

At this point, in my first experiment in research, I had to pause; I had to leave the shining table in the Auckland Library and look farther afield. I learned that Brown had remained a rebel to the end; that he had been refused burial in consecrated ground and that his son had followed his father's coffin to a grave outside the settlement, on the side of Marsland Hill. The grave had been lost, during the barricading of the hill, when the settlers were defending themselves against the Maoris.

I am proud of the courage with which I met this challenge in my research. I was still a young, local boy, smiled on for my interests. I wrote to the Mayor of New Plymouth and, soon after, searchers tramped over Marsland Hill and found the grave, the earliest memorial linking the harsh, dis-



*A bust of Keats' friend Charles Armitage Brown, made in 1828 when he was forty-two by Andrew Wilson*





*From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection*

(Above) *The New Plymouth military barracks on Marsland Hill about 1850 : Mt Egmont in the background*  
 (Below) *A Scottish gentleman with his family and belongings, leaving for Nelson, New Zealand, in 1842*



*From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection*





*From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection*

(Above) *A panorama of the town and harbour of Auckland, New Zealand. From a watercolour by J. Bunney, 1858*  
 (Below) *Auckland post office in the 1860s: the arrival of mail from the home country causes an eager scramble*



*By courtesy of the High Commissioner for New Zealand in the U.K.*



appointing colony to the literary life of 19th-century England.

I had to wait some years to complete the story. I had crossed the world and was living in London when Charles Armitage Brown's grand-daughter presented the drawing of Keats to the National Portrait Gallery. She also gave some of her grandfather's papers, including his diary of the voyage to New Zealand, to the Keats Museum at Hampstead. One summer day I went to Hampstead Heath, to look over Constable's London. I walked where Swinburne had walked and I drank my noon beer at The Spaniards, the old, oak-beamed inn where Keats used to drink with his cronies; where he left them one summer evening and went out to the Heath to listen to the nightingales.

From the inn I walked back across the Heath, to the Keats Museum, and there I came on the missing chapter: the description of Brown's voyage to New Zealand in the *Oriental*. One worn old diary, or notebook, contained his thoughts at sea. First were some shorthand notes on business affairs, then an amusing conversation between the Captain of the *Oriental*, the doctor, and a passenger named Dyke.

*Dyke.* What is it that you are saying about the emancipation of the Negroes from slavery? You mean their liberation from protection.

*Capt.* Not exactly.

*Dyke.* No? Why, they have been abandoned to their own resources without industry or the means of taking care of themselves. . .

*Capt.* Pray, sir, may I inquire—has not a Negro a soul as well as a white man?

*Dyke.* That is a point which neither of us can determine. But of this I feel assured—there are different degrees of souls in different degrees of society; and that superior races of men are endowed by nature with superior faculties, and consequently with superior privileges.

*Capt.* In one word, a man of good family like yourself has a better soul than one of the crew?

*Dyke.* If your question must be answered, I think without self-flattery I may say mine is naturally better.

*Capt.* Mr Dyke, I have the honour of drinking to your very good health.

*Doctor.* And should there be, as you imagine, a difference, may you enjoy many years before the fact shall be certified.

The 'find' in the worn old notebook was Brown's introduction to a proposed book on his experiences during the voyage and after arrival in New Zealand. He wrote: "Every

ship that sails in the same year with cuddy passengers and free emigrants from England to New Zealand must be so alike in character that a description of one is, with no important difference, a description of another. . . It struck me, while listening a few days since to my son's anecdotes of and concerning his fellow cuddy passengers, that what he chanced to experience, though somewhat different, was alike in all essentials. . ." In a later paragraph Brown referred to "the reader" of what he was writing, so it is fair to conclude that he was working with the hope of publication. His reference to talks with his son proves that he wrote his 'introduction' after landing in New Plymouth. So it is true that the old notebook in the Keats Museum at Hampstead contains the first pages of 'professional' prose ever written in New Zealand.

On another page was the description of a meal on board, during a rough sea:

"Morgan!" called out the Captain, "Morgan! instantly put all the glass on the swing-tables—instantly!—did I not say *instantly*, sir? And look! that butter-boat will be over! Can no-one save the melted butter? No, no, steward; don't pour out the beer. Keep it to yourself till someone is bold enough to ask for it. There she goes again! Here's a bobbery!"

To me the fun was better than half-a-dozen dinners and, in my enjoyment of it, I found that my efforts to render assistance were fast abating; when there came a heavier swell and lurch than ever, and the lady on my right hand could no longer attempt to save anything but herself; she gazed at me imploringly, as if I could avert the misfortune, and piteously sighed out: "Oh! how very wretched! Oh! who would consent to exist in a world like this?" I should not have laughed so immoderately if everyone else had not worn so grave a countenance. Had it occurred to me at the moment I would have proposed a toast to what the Captain called, "The delights of the Pacific Ocean".

There is a sad, yet graceful end to my story. The first man to encourage me in my writing, in New Zealand, was Charles Mackay, mayor of one of our big inland towns. His encouragement was very real for he engaged me to write a small book on the amenities of his town, and the Council paid me well for it. From being my patron, he became my friend. Charles Mackay was a tortured mixture of scholarship, kindness and quick temper. He shot a man and was sent to prison. In one of the first letters he wrote me during this unhappy term, he told me that his task for the day was clearing the weeds from the grave of Charles Armitage Brown, on Marsland Hill.



# Oxford in East Africa

by THOMAS HUXLEY

*The Oxford University Expedition to East Africa in 1951, comprising three zoologists and a surveyor-photographer, worked over a forty-five-mile stretch of coast from Dick's Head to the southern end of Kwyhu Island, studying the "status, distribution and breeding biology of the seabirds" of the islands along the coast. The expedition received a grant from The Geographical Magazine Trust Fund.* (Right) *The helmsman of the Basra*



Hugh Southon

"*Sante Sana, Basra!*" The crew of the twenty-ton *jahazi*, the *Basra*, shouted an exultant cry of thanks to their ship for taking them safely out through the reef. Hugh Southon and Peter Gladstone looked wistfully at the receding line of islands through which we had just passed; islands towards which we had by now quite personal feelings and to which we had given names: Breaker, Cavern, Roseate, and in the distance, hardly distinguishable from the long, low silhouette of Simambaya, the shapes of Sodom and Gomorrah. Overhead a few White-cheeked Terns added their noisy clamour to the shouts of the crew, perhaps bidding goodbye to these disturbances of their peace. I gave thanks that we were at last returning to civilized plumbing.

Not for long, though, were we to enjoy as mere passengers our homeward journey. As the *Basra* plunged out into the Indian Ocean toward the rising sun, so the bowsprit dipped deeper beneath the waves, the sail carried a heavier load of water each time it rose into the air, and an ever-lengthening rent appeared in the canvas. The captain and everyone else then seemed to give orders. The *Basra* hove to. The yard was lowered. With chaotic speed the damaged sail was removed, a spare one tied with expendable palm-strips to the yard, and as we scrambled from our sleeping bags and blankets to give a helping hand, the great sail was hauled to the heights by a precisely similar method of

double halliards to that used in Columbus' *Nina*. Taking part with the Bajun in any repetitive action always had its exciting moments. Whether it was hauling up a sail or taking in the sheet, poling the boat against the wind or heaving her off the shallows, someone would start up a chant which, answered by another and another, would produce at once both a hidden rhythm and an incentive to work.

Least involved in these activities was our helmsman. We had first seen him in the village of Rubu earlier in the summer. He was standing with a number of other men watching our altercations with a village shop- and boat-owner. For a Bajun he was tall, about five foot ten inches. He sported a brightly coloured 'skirt' and shirt, his shaven head covered with an embroidered white hat. This in itself would not have attracted our attention, since, but for the managing of the hat which showed as much individual variation as that of an American sailor, there were many others dressed in a similar way. It was the angle at which he held his head, tilted slightly back, a permanent, bemused, even cynical smile showing a mouth too full of teeth, and a slight nervous shaking of the head, which caught the eye. Once, at another time during the summer when we were on one of our boat safaris, we made alongside the *Basra* anxiously hoping, for she had just come up from the south, to find some mail.



The helmsman was on board, though in what capacity he served at that time we did not know. Hugh tried to take a photograph of him but it was, as so often, a disappointing affair. When he realized what was afoot he dashed below, returned clad in a large overcoat and green fez, and then stood at attention for his "peeche". In the evenings he would place his prayer-mat on the few clear square feet of after-decking and make his prayer towards Mecca, for the Bajun are a Moslem people. Apart from the many foods of ours which they would not eat, fearing them to have been cooked in pig's fat, their religion afforded us another source of interest. Only once did we see them 'strip for action', and that was at night when trying to clear the *Basra* from a sand-bank. We, in our turn, had to respect their modesty and frequently would sit in wet shorts when it would have been more sensible to hang them from the masthead. Such inconvenience did not occur to them, for even a poor Bajun had several skirts or *kikoi* of various grades. A simple rectangle in shape, this garment served as a turban, a sail, a fish-scoop, flag, or holdall; while its design was such that, when used as a skirt, the wearer—unlike one clad in shorts—could change from wet to dry without a blush.

Towards the end of this our last journey with the Bajun we got becalmed in a narrow channel between mangrove swamps. The sun had gone down, and as we glided listlessly with the tide, the great lateen sail hanging from the yard, the helmsman sang into the night a thin wavering song. We replied

with a gruff rendering of "I am a bachelor", the swamps echoed with their kind applause, and soon the wind picked up. In half an hour we emerged into the last stretch of open water. The lights of Lamu shone in the distance, and the crew of the *Basra*, with Peter accompanying on the conch, tooted, banged, and shouted, giving warning of our coming to the old Arab town. Nine weeks before we had watched from the shore with fascination the same jahazi signalling the same message of success at the completion of a similar journey from the north.

We visited Lamu twice because it was necessary to pass through it on our way to Kiunga. The journey from Mombasa could be made on land or on sea (discounting the ubiquitous aeroplane). We tried both. Neither journey was comfortable. The 120-ton *Munir* was slow, smelly, and partly awash. The Royal Mail bus was overloaded, over-worked, and broke down on twenty-four occasions during the 240 miles, excelling itself around midnight by refusing to leave the ferry over the Tana river, a little spot famed for its malarial mosquitoes. Lamu holds the visitor. There is a story about one of its half-dozen European inhabitants that he tried to leave, stuck to his decision for the first mile by water to the bus stop, and then turned back. Arabs from Southern Arabia have been navigating the East African coast as far south as Zanzibar for at least three thousand years. Traders by profession (chiefly in spices, ivory and slaves), many of them settled on the coast and intermarried with the local people. In all the parts we visited remains of ancient build-

ings were to be seen and there is evidence (now being unearthed by Kirkman) that a great city once stood at Gedi near Malindi.

Lamu is a decaying remnant of these past glories. Only the Indians—among them the doctor and the vet, the customs officer and the owner of the coir-rope factory—now make an effort to save it. They proudly invited us to attend a sports day which they were organizing at their recently founded sports club, and discussed at some length the problems which beset them. The wealthy Arabs who erected the spacious cool buildings, employed the craftsmen who carved the heavy ornate doors,



A. J. Thornton





*All Kodachromes by Walter Dethler*

*The houses in the old Arab town of Lamu are built of blocks cut from dead coral and covered with a locally made lime plaster. Parallel with the waterfront a narrow street filled with shops runs the length of the town*





*During the South-East Trades which blow from March to the end of August the East African coastal dhows are laid up for extensive repairs. Two Lamu carpenters at work on the bow of a jahazi, a dhow of some twenty-five tons. Below the waterline crude white paint is often used, while shark oil is rubbed into the topsides*



and tenaciously harried the Portuguese whose cannons now lie disused on the waterfront, have disappeared, their livelihood removed with the abolition of slave-trading. The British Administrator, his elbows nudged from all sides, and the hooded vulture keep the streets clean.

Even though the wealth may have dissipated and changed hands the Arab still theoretically owns the coast. The government of Kenya pays £10,000 a year to the Sultan of Zanzibar for the rent of a ten-mile strip of coastal land which includes Lamu and the neighbouring islands. The British Administration cannot manage to have a finger in every pie, so they appoint a number of Liwalis and Mudirs to settle the marriage and other religious disputes. We had the pleasure of meeting the Liwali of Lamu. He had just inspected the local guard, the day being *Id el Fitr*, a Moslem festival, and so was still dressed in a beautiful embroidered purple coat. On his feet were brown socks and new suede shoes. His most entrancing possession, however, was a large Falstaffian white beard, and for days after we used to argue whether he had been appointed Liwali on the size of the beard or whether as a younger man he had foreseen his future and grown it to augment a judicial appearance.

In keeping with his lesser post the Mudir of Kiunga wore a beard of a more austere pattern. This good man was the last but one of the administrative paper-chain which starts somewhere in London. The last man was the Mudir's chief clerk. The Mudir had his offices in a forty-year-old resthouse built for the now infrequent visits of the District Commissioner of Lamu. We, by kind permission, had been allowed to make our permanent headquarters in its upper rooms. The day after our arrival in Kiunga the Mudir returned from the festivities in Lamu and politely asked us to remove our flag from his flag-pole. We did so and soon the red rectangle of the Sultan of Zanzibar was fluttering in the breeze. Ungraciously we felt some thanks were due to us for supplying the halliard. On the fifth day we invited the Mudir up for coffee and Huntley and Palmer's export biscuits. As he came up the outside staircase which communicated with the porch in front of his offices, he called "*Hodi*". To an answering "*Karibu*" our guest walked along the verandah and entered. He wore a long white 'night-shirt' or *kanzu*, a well-cut khaki jacket and sandals on feet that always stuck slightly out. His little hat was frequently pushed back from a sweating

forehead; large, slightly protruding eyes rolled in their sockets while he thought but met ours squarely when shaking hands; and when he talked a little bright red tongue revealed him to be an inveterate partaker of that strange mixture of leaf, nut-shavings, and lime, called betel.

As we sat and conversed in our front room crowded with the oddments that an expedition seems to amass—a room which was to serve as dining-room, darkroom, mapping office and laboratory; a room which towards the end of the summer was to have no peace during the twenty-four hours of the day—I looked out through the open door to the black specks of women collecting cowries on the shining sands, to the islands on which nested our birds, and in the distance the white line of the glistening reef. In good English the Mudir told us he had been a post office clerk in 1916, that his Mudiria contained some nine villages, that he was allowed to fine up to 500 shillings or give a month's imprisonment for petty crimes. More serious cases were walked the 120 miles by land to Lamu. Theft was not apparently one of his troubles, an interesting point as the manager at Smith Mackenzie's Lamu branch, an Indian ("There used to be a European here, when Lamu was more important") told us that the Bajun were destroying their own livelihood as coastal carriers. Nowadays traders did not trust them with cargoes other than firewood, for manufactured items tended to disappear. It is only fair to add that we never had anything stolen from us. The Mudir instructed us to consult him before entering into any bargain, advice which saved us many pounds, and said he would always be ready to give us assistance. Then after discussing fishing, game, and local news, he belched politely, refused a third cup, and bade us good-morning.

The villages controlled by the Mudir, himself a Bajun from Patta Island, are all in the Bajun country. The Bajun themselves are separate from the surrounding African tribes, provided one makes no attempt to find a clear dividing line. A mixture of Arab sailors and African women has produced a medium dark-skinned race of people adept at sailing, boat-building, fishing, cattle- and goat-herding, cultivating, and various ploys necessary for an almost totally self-supporting existence. Their motto, if they had one, would be: "If it is worth making, make it so that it won't last too long". This must be, of course, in greater or lesser





(Above) *Kiunga, only ten miles from the border of Somalia, attracts to it both trading Arabs, who despite their comparative wealth live in thatched mud huts like the Bajun, and Somalis from the north.*  
 (Below) *Two Somalis discuss the price of a hide, their chief stock-in-trade, with a local dealer*







(Above) Having disposed of their wares, these Somali traders return to their own country, their camels laden with sugar, lamps, kerosene, cloth, and cooking pots. (Below) Peter Gladstone, John Smart (a Kenya Forest Officer) and their guide on a bird-collecting expedition at an inland swamp







*The main object of the Oxford Expedition was to study the seabirds of the Kiunga Archipelago. To reach their nesting islands two boats were used. (Above) The smaller Lulu, with her lateen rig. At some distance the smooth silhouette of one of the longer islands gives no hint of their rough edges of weathered coral rock, a gruelling test to footwear. (Left) The 'coral buckets' on their seaward and southern sides occasionally contained nests, of the Bridled Tern as well as of Hemprich's Gull*





*The Bajun are adept fishermen, nets, traps, and spears being used to catch the many kinds of fish that are found in the shallow coastal waters inside the live seaward reef. (Above) A necessary supplement to the expedition's army food - rations: Mohammed Abid, Kibwana and Peter Gladstone with a catch. At low tide (right) the strange mushroom shape of many of the islands is revealed. Tweedledum, one of the small 'inner' islands, displays the overhang created by waves undercutting its base*







(Above) *The expedition's cook washing the dishes on the beach to the landward side of one of the islands, on which a camp was sometimes made. On this sheltered side mangrove trees occasionally colonized the sands. (Below) Young of the White-faced Tree Duck, two of whose nests were found*





degree the motto of all manufacturers. (Why is the thought so depressing?) But the breakage-rate of Bajun-made goods was very high; and we were forcibly made aware of this on many occasions. For instance, the rigging of the two boats that we hired was continually breaking, costing us that sought-after commodity of 'modern' countries: time. Flimsy coir was exchanged for Manilla that we had brought with us and we lost no more.

The folk of Kiunga or whatever village we visited always found time to come and stare at us. A feeling of competition arose in our activities. Would skinning a bird or mending a gun induce a larger audience? Yet crowd as they might, they were never hostile. On the contrary their hospitality frequently extended to help with our gear, gifts of coconuts, which when opened with swift, skilful cuts of a sharp knife provided a long, refreshing drink, or little cups of hot, sweet, black tea. Walter Deshler repaid much of their kindness by mending spectacles, a bicycle, a paraffin refrigerator, a rifle and many other incongruous objects; while Hugh Southon saved a small boy's life by skilfully cleaning and bandaging an unpleasant gash in his head. I learnt a lesson on that occasion: never ask a blind man to look at the stars. On the fourth day the wound, which had been made by the kicking hoof of a tethered cow, looked no better. The village dresser was still in Lamu, the responsibility could not be shelved. I had just watched the wound being re-dressed, Peter keeping the child away from fitful tears by showing it coloured plates from *Birds of South Africa*. I turned to the Mudir and fervently explained that the child's family should send it to the hospital in Lamu. "Oh no," he said, "I cannot do that. Its parents are too poor; and if I told them what you thought, they would only cry."

The main object of the expedition was "to study the breeding biology of the seabirds of the Kiunga Archipelago". Working backwards I shall try to explain what this means. First of all, then, the Kiunga Archipelago. About a mile off the shores of the mainland opposite Kiunga there is an island approximately a mile and a half long called Kiunga Mwini. Not quite in line with its northern tip there are about eight islands of various sizes, some a few acres others only a few square yards, which stand like a string of beads at varying distances apart, roughly parallel with the coast. These constitute the Kiunga Archipelago, though such a magnificent term is hardly justifiable. Both to the north, well beyond the border between

Kenya and Somalia, and to the south at least as far as Lamu, with gaps of perhaps twenty miles, the same formation can be found. Between these outer islands (which form a sort of discontinuous breakwater) and the mainland, mangrove swamps form a network of waterways which at high tide are navigable to all the native craft. Seaward of the whole lot is the live reef. In places we found an 'inner' and 'outer' line of what are commonly called coral islands. To what extent the word coral is a geological misnomer I do not know. Some of us held a theory that they represented an old live reef which had sunk beneath the surface, effected a sea change, and then in stretches risen again only to suffer a drastic pruning from wind and wave.

Whatever may have happened in the past, the islands now have a striking shape. Generally they are like a thick-stalked mushroom with about a ten-foot drop from the lip to the flat rock beach below. On the seaward side, however, the umbrella of the mushroom was frequently worn away right back to the stalk, forming a stepped wall. We came to the conclusion that the size of the overhang had a direct influence on what species of plants could colonize the tops of the islands. If the overhang was large the spray was almost entirely deflected back into the sea; if small or non-existent the waves would merely change direction vertically, hurtle upwards into the air thirty or forty feet, and come crashing downwards onto the top of the island. Thus a walk from seaward to landward took one from bare rock, over a sparsely covered area from the crannies of which grew prostrate, apparently leafless plants with a rubbery texture, to creeping thick-leaved species bearing tiny pink flowers, and finally more delicate kinds whose mauve, yellow, blue or white petals gave colour to the islands. Thorny bushes seldom more than a few feet in height, aloes with their thick triangular leaves which tapered to a sharp painful spike, and various grasses were also found. The woody stems of one bush, *Cap-paris galeata*, beneath which the mottled egg of a Bridled Tern was often found, were used by the Bajun as toothbrushes.

Secondly, the seabirds. On thirty-one of the many islands which we visited we found a total of about 7000 nests. They were usually in the form of shallow depressions or scrapes, sometimes lined with vegetable debris, according to the species of the bird. They belonged to the Hemprich's Gull and to the White-cheeked, Roseate, Bridled and Noddy Terns.





*Hugh Southon*



*Hugh Southon*



*Walter  
Desher*

*For its headquarters at Kiunga the Oxford Expedition had the use of (above) a government resthouse flying the flag of the Sultan of Zanzibar, with that of the expedition nearby on an improvised pole. The Mudir (inset), a Bajun member of the local administration, had his offices on the ground floor. In the main upper room temporary shelves (left) housed the expedition's gear*





Hugh Southon

*Landing on an island with an aluminium ladder, an invaluable piece of equipment, in the course of a daily round to inspect the seabirds' nests*

We were also interested in ascertaining whether the White-faced and Fulvous Tree Ducks still nested on the islands. We found two clutches being incubated by the White-faced Tree Duck. Safety in the womb of the island! But they start off their career perilously, it seemed, for while only twelve hours old they tumble over the edge of the island into the swirling sea and then must swim more than a mile to the mainland. In 1905, Sir Frederick Jackson, an eminent ornithologist and then Deputy Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, sent his native collector to these islands. This man returned with specimens of the above-mentioned birds and the statement that they were breeding in August. It was largely on his evidence that we set out from Oxford, over six thousand miles of sea, with the intention of substantiating and enlarging on this little that was known.

Lastly, apart from their distribution we wanted to find out what we could concerning the breeding biology of these birds; a subject which included, amongst other matters, the selection of nest-sites, the effects of tropical conditions, food, periods of incubation, and information concerning the predation of eggs—by human as well as other predators.

*Poling through one of the narrow mangrove channels: a form of exercise varied at intervals by letting the pole stick in the mud and falling in*



Walter Dethler

A few of the mass of facts relating to these topics were brought to light. To supplement this observational work it was necessary both to survey and photograph the pertinent islands in such detail that each nest-site could be located and, with future investigations of the bird colonies in mind, to relate them to each other on a small-scale map. To ensure that our identifications were correct and to elucidate to which sub-species some of the birds belonged, we shot and prepared skins of some fifty specimens. These included non-breeding species not mentioned above. Finally, the majority of the plants found on the islands were collected so that a factual picture of the vegetation surrounding a nest could be made.

In order to carry out this programme of work we had to hire two small boats (*mashua*), and two sailors to man them. The *Lulu* was some fourteen feet long. With her lateen rig, she fairly skimmed along the water. The other larger boat possessed no name, so we christened her *Maskini*, which means poor. The first time we went out in her, one man had to bail continuously. The *mashua* is largely made from mangrove wood. All the timbers are extremely solid. There is little bending or carving, knees or gussets being



obtained from branching parts of trees of the desired shape. The Bajun does not like tacking against the wind. Indeed his boat does not lend itself well to this, for coming about is a tricky process involving the hauling of the sail right round in front of the yard. One can, in fact, get literally wrapped up in the work. But just as punting is suited to the Cherwell, so poling is suited to the shallow coastal waterways of the Bajun country. One of the finest sights I saw was a long *mtumbwe* or dug-out canoe with five thin fishermen standing along its length. Each of them wielded a tall pole, their tireless movements not coinciding one with another as do those of the crew of an 'eight', yet driving their craft with speed.

Getting onto the islands with cameras, note-books, binoculars, surveying instruments and guns was full of the hazards familiar to any scientist working in the field. To surmount the overhang we used an aluminium ladder, kindly lent to us by Myles North, the District Commissioner of Thika. At other times we landed at the southern end, on the stepped wall. Try putting a lot of buckets of varying sizes on the treads of your front staircase. Then, dressed only in a pair of shorts and running shoes and with a friend at the bottom splashing you intermittently with a hose, see if you can get to the top without scraping your ankles. At least you may get some idea of the fun we had.

Helping and laughing with us at various times during the summer were three Bajun sailors: Omari, Kibwana, and Mohammed Abid. The pay may have been good, but the job was not one to attract all comers. For one thing the men had to report to us at given times. In Bajun life time has no relation to the hands of a clock; it is a duration between two events. One of the natural pairs of events, the rising and setting of the sun, from which one can tell the time to the half-hour, occurs with such regularity that for practical purposes clock and Bajun time coincide. Here was an aid to understanding between the Bajun and ourselves. But there was no aid for the sailor to comply with the request: "Come back in two hours". He had to make a personal and unfamiliar effort.

The job also required a constant cooperation with a stranger's whims, to the extent even of taking action contrary to the Bajun's own customs, combined with a sufficient strongmindedness to prevent us from unwittingly committing suicide. For instance it was sometimes necessary for us to sail close to an island at high tide so that a preliminary

survey of the birds present could be made. As this was mildly dangerous a Bajun would on his own account have waited for a more suitable moment; and less cooperative men could, as we found, produce a series of excuses and even lies in order to evade the work. It is a credit to our three sailors that by the end of the summer we felt confident that when they said "Such a method is unsafe", they were telling the truth. It must be made clear, however, that they were exceptional. We had to dismiss two others who could not make the grade.

I would also add that no Bajun is exempt from a practice which, though by Western standards considered dishonest, is common to all the Oriental world, namely that of trying to charge three times the proper price. We, like the Somali traders who come, their camels loaded with skins, every year from the north, were expected to haggle. No animosity is engendered; indeed if one does not bargain considerable respect will be lost.

So a balance established itself between us which was manifested in all kinds of happy arrangements as daily problems presented themselves for solution. This balance is even more creditable to the Bajun when one considers that never before had they to contend with so many Europeans over such a long period. A Forest Officer, a Game Warden, or even on one occasion an aeroplane, had touched down for a couple of days: mere week-enders compared with us eight-week paying guests. Yet none of these arrangements would have been possible had it not been for a Kenya Forest Officer, John Smart, who virtually held our hands for the first two weeks, bargaining and setting the standards which served us in such good stead for the rest of the summer.

Perhaps too rosy a picture of the Bajun has been given. Other people in Kenya were always quick to remind us of our peculiar position, with recommendations from the Governor down to the Mudir. Even so these surely were not known to all the Bajun. A little incident will illustrate this. Hugh Southon, Omari and I were returning from a ten-day safari when we saw a fishing *mtumbwe* not far off our course. Fish straight from the fisherman are cheaper, so with supper in mind we sailed towards it. As we approached, two little old men cooking their dinner over a charcoal fire straightened their backs and called to us a welcoming "*Jambo*". Then without warning one of them stood up, picked his freshly cooked fish from the fire and hurled it through the air into our boat, a spontaneous, unsolicited gift.



# Life on Chinese Waterways

by BERNARD LLEWELLYN



All photographs by J. S.

*A sampan, like a Venetian gondola, on a river in Hunan Province*

*People who live permanently on rivers and canals are everywhere a class apart. Three items in the present number deal with peculiarities of this floating life: in China, Britain and Holland*

WHEN I lived on the banks of the Pearl River on Canton's little island of Shameen, I spent many an evening under the great spread of the banyan trees, watching the life on the river. It was for the most part a leisurely life such as befitted stately junks and little sampans looking for fares; and the occasional steamer and motor launch which chugged across the water seemed, at times, to be hastening from the scene as if made aware of their irrelevance.

For most of the river life is old and traditional like the waterways themselves. China's is the oldest of living civilizations; but the rivers are older still, and, in the north, cradled the huts and hamlets in which that civilization was born.

From early times the Yangtse and Pearl Rivers have been main highways inland from the coast: towns and cities have grown up along their banks. Something like a tenth of

the earth's population is estimated to live in the huge basin of the Yangtse; while further south the country is reticulated with streams which provide easy communication.

Add to these main arteries the Grand Canal—a section of it was built 2500 years ago—which, starting from Hangchow, crosses the Yangtse and Yellow Rivers to Tientsin and Peking; add, too, the numerous tributaries of the big rivers; and you begin to glimpse the influence that waterways have had on Chinese life. They helped, for instance, to create the unsurpassed glories of Suchow and Hangchow which European travellers raved about 700 years ago, when junks in their hundreds—sometimes carrying as many as a dozen sails—laden with merchandise from the Indies, sailed home to the magnificent capital of the Sung emperors.

During yesterday and today those glories have vanished; for we live in a more hurried





(Above) *At the foot of a modern Shanghai skyscraper, the traffic of a floating population crowds Soochow Creek. The creeks in Shanghai provide living room as well as water routes: in Ciccawei Creek (below) "it is difficult to travel at all, so full are they of little craft where whole families live"*







(Above) Boatmen wait for custom while their sampans form the equivalent of a taxi-rank on the Yangtze.  
 (Below) The high sterns of two "Noah's Arks" on the Pearl River. These galleon-like passenger junks are pleasant to travel in: they have no engines (being towed by launches) and are free from vibration







*The pattern of a junk's sail. Set behind its mast, with bamboo ribs, it curves but slightly in the breeze*



world which puts a premium on the passenger steamer and launch. It is left to old books and museum paintings to remind us of past splendours. Yet the shadowings of the day before yesterday still remain on the waters of Chinese lakes and rivers.

The Chinese characters for our word "landscape" are *shan shui* (mountain, water) and the two ideas are invariably found together in the scrolls of landscape artists. Nor would it be easy to design boats harmonizing more beautifully with the natural scene than the junks and sampans found all over China.

It is easy to believe the story that the first Chinese boats were modelled on leaves floating on the water. The patched sails of the oldest junk and the matting roof of the dirtiest sampan are never out of place. And anyone who has seen them, as I have, with their lamps lit, swinging broadside down the Yangtse after dark could easily make the mistake of thinking they were heading for Fairyland.

The "camel of the river", as the Chinese often call the junk, has probably not altered its basic shape since it originated—perhaps 2000 to 3000 years ago. There are innumerable types of junk; and the expert in such craft can tell at a glance where a particular vessel was built. Far inland you see the smaller varieties, often with sails furled, being hauled upstream by a sweating line of half-naked trackers. Off the China coast I have watched the bigger two- or three-masted junks hull down over the horizon, and seen them coming into Hong Kong, infinitely more beautiful than the steamship or the aeroplane.

At the other end of the scale is the sampan, found on every navigable waterway in China: a multi-purpose craft, used to ferry passengers or for an afternoon's fishing. At night in Canton these boats used to resemble Venetian gondolas as young men and their 'taxi-dancers' were rowed up the moonlit backwaters of the Pearl River.

Between the sampan and the sailing junk is a whole range of craft, from the rafts of the cormorant fishers to the floating restaurants and houseboats of the southern provinces.

The most dangerous journey I ever made on a Chinese river was on a ninety-foot bamboo raft which carried me from Chinese Tibet down the rapid-infested Ya River to Kiating. The crew of five was captained by a one-eyed giant whom I christened Cyclops, and who steered his bucking, creaking craft—with its terrified passenger—down the rapids with a nonchalance that revealed him as a master

mariner.

Many lives have been lost when craft have overturned in savage rivers like the Ya. Nor will anyone ever know how many have found a watery grave in the Yangtse, river of many names. Almost anywhere along its banks you can see the oily green water swirling relentlessly seawards, taking every drifting thing down with it. The whirlpools and eddies might be the stirrings of a submerged river-god impatient for the next sampan to overturn and deliver up its occupants to the swift waters.

Yet there are many quieter rivers where you can journey peacefully enough. I once travelled in a "Noah's Ark" from Canton to Wuchow in Kwangsi Province. "Noah's Ark" was the name foreigners gave to the great passenger-carrying junks which were towed along the Pearl River by little steam-launches. They had high sweeping sterns relieved by windows, and looked as those Spanish galleons must once have looked when the Elizabethan sea-dogs chased them in the Caribbean.

Inside they were more comfortable than the average Yangtse river steamer. We passengers each had a narrow space reserved for us on a raised platform covered by matting. Here we ate, sat, and slept for three days as we moved slowly up-river in the wake of our launch, on the end of a thick bamboo rope which creaked ominously from time to time and broke at least once.

Along some creeks and canals it is sometimes difficult to travel at all, so full are they of little craft where whole families live and where washing, threaded on bamboo poles, flutters between the boats. Shanghai has more than one such creek; but I doubt whether even that giant metropolis can rival the "floating city" of Canton.

The Cantonese people known as the Tanchia spend their lives afloat on sampan or junk. They pay rates to the municipal authorities just as householders do on land, the river forming a separate precinct within the city limits. In former times this floating population ran into hundreds of thousands; for centuries the Tanchia were regarded as social outcasts and were debarred from all official appointments.

The rivers, creeks and canals of China thus provide living room as well as inland water routes. They vary from muddy backwaters to tranquil streams and mighty rivers; but they reflect the pattern of a common life—the but slowly changing existence of those who live and work on Chinese waterways.



(Left) A lock-keeper at Tottenham on the navigable River Lea, which is connected to the Regent's Canal by "Duckett's Cut," in the East End of London. Lock-keepers play an important part in the lives of those who dwell on our canals. (Below) The boat is the family's home, as much here in the heart of London or on the canals in the English countryside as it is on the waterways of Holland or China. Boatmen's lives are passed in a small mobile world of their own, between the high walls of a city's warehouses or the green fields of the open country, on the way to Birmingham, Leicester or Nottingham. They are citizens of no town, but move placidly from—

—one to another in their "narrow boats", surrounded by all their belongings. Their children, who are born and brought up on board, make their chief contact with the world ashore during the time they spend at school in London. While travelling they do 'home-work' which is set them by the school teacher and corrected on their return. Now, in addition, there is a hostel in Birmingham where they can stay while attending different local schools





# Life on London's Canal

Notes and Photographs by H. DENNIS JONES



*Father and son on one of the Grand Union Canal Company's boats: working it is a family affair*

Not many people—not many Londoners even—realize that a canal runs right through the city from one end to the other. It stretches from Regent's Dock, Limehouse, in the east (near its extremity a branch links it with the navigable River Lea) to a point six miles north of Brentford in the west. Here it joins the main Brentford (Thames) to Birmingham waterway. It was not planned or built as one system but in sections, the 'youngest' of which dates from 1830 and the earliest from 1793. Travelling down this narrow strip of water for the first time you see London from a totally different viewpoint. Even passing the dreary little houses of Hoxton or the bits of wasteland where tumble-down streets do not quite reach the bank in Paddington, you still sense the excitement of the days when the "navvy" (navigational worker) digging the canals was regarded as the future saviour of mankind, and water transport was revolutionizing our economy. You can also—a curious contradiction, for canals were essential to the Industrial Revo-

lution—gain a vivid appreciation of the days when industrialization and town life did not yet mean perpetual noise. The canal in fact is another world, one where strangers are scrutinized before being welcomed. A gruff "What are you doing here?" will greet you before long should you venture along the tow-path. However, armed with a permit you may pass freely.

In Regent's Park and elsewhere, especially in the outskirts of London, you will see the canal's old and rural surroundings unchanged. At other points fine new factories show that water transport is by no means moribund. Indeed, traffic in recent years has increased appreciably. And all the time the clumsy Thames lighters, towed by patient horses, and the busily chugging pairs of "narrow boats" will keep on passing you. Working the boats is one of the few essentially hereditary trades left in Britain. A boatman needs a wife to steer the motorless "butty" as well as to cook and darn, and as soon as their children can toddle they too help in the work.



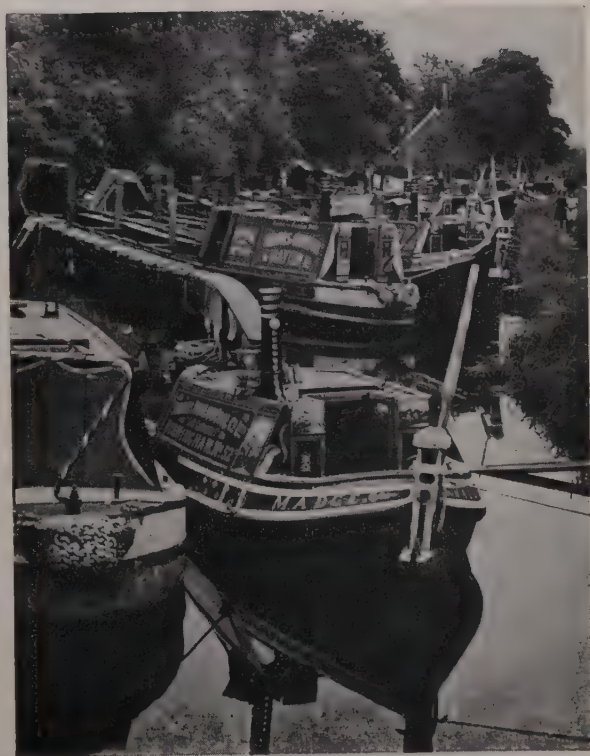
(Left) A lighterman manoeuvring his barge on a stretch of Regent's Canal in Islington. Lighters (or dumb-barges) are used for unloading big ships in the Thames-side docks; the barges are then towed to wharves elsewhere in the city. (Below) A boat and butty in Regent's Canal Dock, waiting to move into the lock at the start of the 135-mile journey to Birmingham with a load of pig-iron. Narrow boats, such as these, work in pairs; the boat tows the "butty" which has no motor. Some stretches of canal are just wide enough for the seven-foot beam of a single boat, but the locks normally take two at a time, side by side







(Above) Nowadays horses are only used for pulling Thames barges. They are provided, together with drivers, by the canal authorities as far as Berkhamsted, 28 miles north-west of London. Beyond that point, boats with motors are used. (Right) A 24-hours' delay caused by a lock being under repair resulted in this hold-up of narrow boats at Watford. The gay and cheerful decoration of the boats is traditional and a good example of a living form of popular art





*London's canal makes a great loop from the Thames at Limehouse in the east round to the Thames again at Brentford in the west. (Above) It passes between the modern warehouses of Finsbury before plunging (below) into the 1000-yard-long Islington tunnel. Then, within a short distance, while still in the—*







*—middle of London, its surroundings (above) in Regent's Park become as leafy and countrified as those of the stretches that join the capital to the industrial cities of the Midlands. (Below) A lock and lock-keeper's cottage near Rickmansworth, where the real country begins: London is left behind at last*



# The Dordogne

by CYRIL CONNOLLY

*Founder and editor for twelve years of the literary review Horizon, whose recent decease was so widely lamented, Mr Connolly admits travel as his chief recreation. Here he recommends to other travellers the attractions of a region of France which nature has favoured and man embellished*

THE Dordogne is exactly 300 miles long which puts it into the second rank among French rivers; no town of any size, except Bergerac, lies on its banks; it does not even reach the sea. Yet year by year it grows in prestige and when people say they are going to the Dordogne (and they never say they are going to the Garonne or the Seine or the Loire) they mean something which the words do not express and which is intelligible only to those who have already taken the cure—for that is what the visit is.

What is the essential quality of this "Dordogne"? It means a certain climate, a certain relationship between man and nature, a special kind of landscape and architecture, which, taken together, form a complete and self-dependent little world somehow different in time from our own and exercising an extraordinarily soothing effect on all who stay there more than a week. The climate is peculiar to the south-western slopes of the Massif Central which are influenced by the Atlantic. The winters are not very cold, the springs and autumns are dry and sunny, the summers wet and thundery. The plateaux are bleak but the long river valleys, Dordogne, Lot, Vézère, Isle, are soft and balmy. Mediterranean evergreens bloom on the cliffs of Les Eyzies while the Basins of Brive, of Beaulieu and Souillac enjoy the same climate as Pau. Early vegetables and delicious fruit thrive round Brive. The plateaux are covered with oak copses, rich in truffles; in the valleys maize, walnuts, tobacco, vines spread out. The vegetation is northern; the air and light are of the south. Oxen are in general use and if we replace the cypress by the poplar we receive an impression of Tuscany which accounts for the epithet 'Virgilian' which is sometimes applied.

Each river has certain characteristics: the Lot is wild and lonely, the Vézère seems consecrated to prehistory, the Isle, which passes through Périgueux, is quiet and placid. The Dordogne alone combines a noble grace and austerity with a civilized overtone of feudal castles and Romanesque churches. If one were to sum up its appeal,

especially to English visitors, one would be tempted to ascribe it to a quality of remembered childhood. If we go for a walk anywhere along the Dordogne we find everything is English—the flowers, the trees, the fields, the hedges—but multiplied to a vast size and enriched by the southern light with a kind of radiance. Things look as when we first saw them and recall by their luxuriance the indelible sensation of the turf round Corfe Castle or the heather at Oban when for the first time we apprehended them with wonder. Summer showers pelt down but never create a sensation of darkness: the vast landscape stretches out in its lowering greens broken by the white cliffs along the river, the brown of a castle—and suddenly the sun reappears. The turf is warm and springy, steam rises from the wild quinces along the hedges, the enormous blackberries glisten, the lemon-yellow walnut-trees or dazzling chestnuts shake themselves, the geese go back into single file, the rainbow forms across the Cirque de Montvalent; the deluge is over.

The villages are among the most beautiful in the world: the pointed roofs are covered with round grey tiles, the walls are of unhewn stones, there is a profusion of small towers and dovecotes, of rough stone steps leading up to lofts, and tall vines cover every door. The castles of the Dordogne are on a gigantic scale but every village boasts a small manor or *gentilhomme* (they are graded according to whether they have four towers or two towers or one) which fits perfectly into the landscape, like the little Romanesque church with its carved porch and ruined cloister. These small manors seem the ideal retreat for the present time and it is a pleasant daydream to search for one's favourite—Autoire, St Sozy, Salignac or the magnificent Latreigne.

Thé Dordogne rises in the Puy de Sancy and for many miles is a mountain river flowing through sombre gorges and newly made lakes. From Argentat to Beaulieu there is a road along it for twenty-five kilometres; this stretch is very little known and most beautiful. At Beaulieu civilization begins, there is a good hotel and a wonderful Romanesque church





*All photographs by John Gos*

*The valley of the Dordogne from the battlements of the Château de Beynac. The hills about bristle with castles, but Beynac, the seat of one of the four baronies of Périgord, was the most formidable of all. Originally built, it is believed, in the 8th century against the Saracen invaders, it belonged 400 years later to Richard Coeur de Lion who had inherited the duchy of Aquitaine from his mother*



*For twelve centuries the Château de Beynac has glowered defiantly above the River Dordogne. Below it lie the well-tilled fields of maize and tobacco; geese fatten under the walnut-trees that line the roads, and around are the vineyards and fruit-trees whose products help to load the tables of this rich land. The narrow village straggles at the foot of the cliffs, its houses facing the river*



*The Dordogne rises in the Massif Central and flows west to join the Garonne near Bordeaux. Halfway between the rocky gorges at its source and the marshes at its mouth the river winds among the flat meadows and thick woods of Le Périgord Noir, so called because of the truffles, those delectable parasites that grow on the roots of oaks beneath the thin soil in the surrounding limestone hills*



*Sarlat, the largest town in the area depicted in these photographs, lies about two miles from the River Dordogne. It is a pleasant, sleepy place, mainly 15th- and 16th-century in character; the steep, narrow streets emerge into little places or become flights of steps with a delightful inconsequence. It has a cathedral and many old sandstone houses; in one Montaigne's friend La Boétie was born*







*The very handsome Romanesque church at Souillac, a few miles up the valley, gives the first foretaste of the Midi to the traveller from the north. Souillac has a busier air than Sarlat, derived no doubt from its position on the road to Toulouse from Paris, but behind the prosperous-looking façades of its main street it is no more than another small town famous in the neighbourhood for its goose market*



*The chequered pattern of hedgeless fields in the valley of the Dordogne, opposite La Roque-Gageac. Wine and tobacco are the district's most important sources of wealth and wheat, maize, potatoes, fruit, chestnuts and walnuts are all extensively grown in the rich valley soil, where land is so highly prized that farms are rarely sold. (Opposite) Walnut-trees are planted by the side of many roads. The uses to which they are put are an excellent example of peasant economy: the leaves are made into an apéritif called quinquana, the husks a liqueur, crème de noix, the nuts—*



—themselves are mostly sold but some are retained and crushed for their oil, the residue being fed to cows. Even the shells are ground and dusted on the floors of the bread-baking ovens. Oxen always work in pairs; no harness is used, the central pole of the narrow cart being hitched to the yoke by an iron pin. Their faces are veiled to protect them from flies. The long stick which the driver carries indicates to the well-trained team which way they are to turn, for there are no reins. Although the speed at which they walk seems slow, a good team can plough as well as horses





*A farmer in the Dordogne valley, spraying his vines. Each farm has a small patch of vines but the best wine comes from vineyards on the slopes of the hills above, which also belong to the valley farmers. The peasants of the Dordogne are sturdy, self-sufficient and friendly; though not averse to making use of modern equipment they are well aware that their land needs more than machines and chemicals can provide if it is to give its best and their methods of cultivation produce yields that would be the envy of most English farmers*



and portico. Five miles further on, near Bretenoux, is the first of the enormous castles, a triangular block of red masonry with a stupendous view and a series of rooms 'restored' by a retired tenor from the Paris opera. Two miles south is the most beautiful of all the Renaissance buildings of the Dordogne, the Château de Montal, which M. Fenaille almost put back into its original state, recovering its carved chimney-pieces and dormers from all over the world. Only the South Kensington museum has refused to disgorge its *lucarne*. The frieze in the courtyard with the old family motto for the son who never came back from the war in Italy, "*Plus d'espoir*", is exquisite. From here a road runs up through the lovely village of Autoire to the Causse, the scrubby plateau which conceals the *bondieuseries* of Rocamadour and the preposterous Gouffre de Padirac with its chilly underground river. The Causse de Gramat with its snakes and pot-holes forms a southern rampart to the ravishing valley of the Dordogne which now enters its most beautiful reaches. There is a road along the left bank to Carennac where the hotel is part of an old monastery in which Fénelon wrote some of his *Télémaque*, making golden apples of the quinces on "Calypso's Island" below in the river. Carennac is the sunniest and loveliest of all the Dordogne villages. The road continues through the walnut orchards over high ground and one can walk to the edge of the cliffs which overhang the river and look down on the landscape of Claude and Poussin. After Floirac we cross over and take a cobbled lane which runs from Gluges, with its underground church, to Creysse. We are now in the Cirque de Montvalent, an amphitheatre of rock through which the river meanders; the road goes under the cliff through woodland with endless glimpses of broken water and sandy beaches. Creysse, by its variegated stone-colours and its church, is a water-bound rival to Carennac. From here one can go straight to Souillac or else follow the river by Meyronne and Lacave and the Louis XIII Château de Latreigne, rising out of the water, to Pinsac and Souillac.

Souillac is the capital of the upper Dordogne; it is on the main line from north to south, possesses a first-class hotel and two good cafés. The church has a statue of Isaiah which is one of the most graceful, even dandified triumphs of the Romanesque. Souillac is the only small town of the region to make an appeal to the mind. The "Syndicat d'Initiative" is in the charge of M. Pierre Betz who edits from Souillac his art magazine

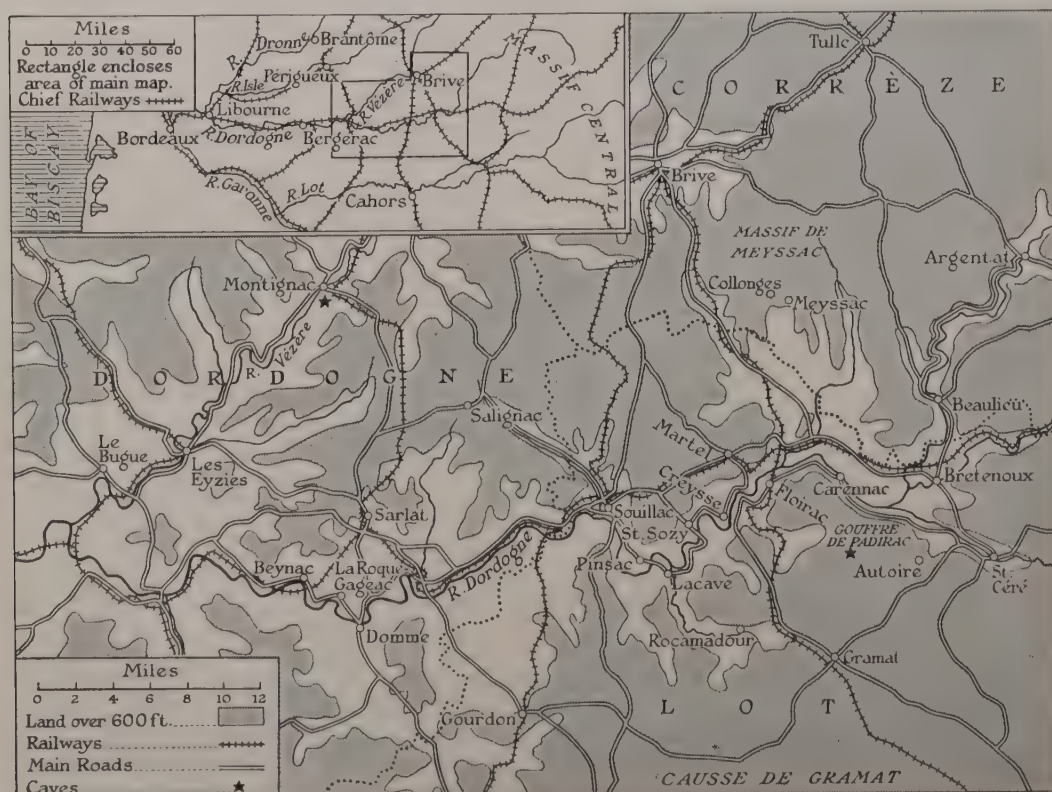
*Le Point*. M. Couderc's hotel used to be a favourite of writers and painters (though now swamped by charabancs in the high season) and many Paris intellectuals, who made the district their headquarters during the Resistance, return for holidays. Souillac is the best centre from which to explore the region, not only of the Dordogne, but of the surrounding Causses. Martel with its towers is the most interesting of the neighbouring towns and a few miles to the north, in the direction of Brive and Tulle, is an area of hill and forest, the Massif de Meyssac, which has an appeal of its own. The soil is red sandstone, the bracing uplands are covered with heather and enormous chestnuts, the villages unspoilt, the views superb. The rich earth has none of the gloomy aridity of the Causses, and Collonges, where the vines make arbours of every rose-red house, is full of those bargains in masonry which tempt one to settle. Brive is worth a visit, if only for its admirable train services; there are expresses to Bordeaux, Paris, Barcelona, Milan, and it has a good bookshop. In the last two years new hotels have been opened south of Souillac in two old country-houses set in wild country and enormous parks, one near Gramat and one outside Cahors. Both these can be reached from Souillac by the main line and may help those travellers who wish to get away from the bustle of Souillac in summer where the hotels have never recovered from "*l'article*"—as they call an enthusiastic description of their beauties which appeared simultaneously in the French and American *Vogue*.

Below Souillac the Dordogne becomes more public and for the rest of its course is kept company by the railway. As the hills dwindle and the valley widens, the castles grow more and more magnificent until we reach a stretch between Domme and Beynac which can compare in beauty and interest with the Rhine and the Loire. Domme is one of those rectangular 13th-century *bastides* which shows the English influence of the Hundred Years' War; it is built on a cliff some 500 feet above the river and enjoys one of the most beautiful prospects in the world. Below, on the river-level, is the village of La Roque-Gageac which some consider to be the loveliest in France. The third of the accompanying photographs gives some idea of the harmony of hillside and water-meadow which the Dordogne achieves at this point. At Beynac, a little lower down, is a good inn and two of the finest castles on the river. The Château de Beynac, of the 13th, 14th and 16th centuries, is restored and sumptuously kept up. The view from its

ramparts, seen in the first photograph, embraces another château, Fayrac. The second photograph shows the impregnable nature of these castles when viewed from the river. Across the Dordogne is the ruined stronghold of Castelnaud whose construction was completed by the English, who added the dungeon. Many of the Dordogne castles are difficult of access but the ruins of Castelnaud are like some English feudal beauty-spot; the wild thyme and valerian grow over the walls and the pomegranate flowers in the courtyard. Even without its view it is one of the most romantic corners on the whole river and its white battlements and crumbling arches are for ever safe from the rich owner in Paris and the careful restorer.

The centre for this part is Sarlat, a pleasant sleepy little town renowned for its truffles and its mediaeval architecture. Here lives the bookseller made famous as a symbol of French culture by Henry Miller in his *Colossus of Maroussi*. The Vézère enters the Dordogne near Le Bugue and the combined rivers flow through the Périgord Noir with its sandy tracks and pinewoods to Bergerac and prosperity; but from Sarlat a road cuts across to the Vézère at Les Eyzies. The prehistoric cave-drawings are disappointing after the new

discoveries higher up at Montignac, but the situation is more beautiful and there is a particular charm about the 19th-century civilization which grew up round the caves; the wistaria-hung hotels, with their comfortable sitting-rooms, have something of the atmosphere of Olympia and Delphi. There is no space to go into the mysteries of prehistory, we can only say that the warm sheltered valley with its low bluffs and easily tunnelled rock must have had some special appeal for a vanished race of artists and hunters. The caves at Lascaux, near Montignac, are one of the wonders of the world. The recently discovered paintings have a scope and freshness that make one proud to belong to a species which so many thousand years ago was able to create this pictorial magic. Lascaux is the Parthenon of prehistory: the valley of the Vézère is the foundation of humanism, a landscape where the work of man is like a mineral flower on the tunnelled rock, as exciting and beautiful as the stalagmites and stalactites of Lacave and Padirac are monotonous and unfriendly. To all who have not quite given up hope for mankind this is holy ground. So accomplished are the paintings of this race which was suddenly to vanish, so peculiar are the sites chosen for them, that one



A. J. Thornton



wonders if the valley of the Vézère was not a site specially allotted to an élite, like the castles where Hitler perfected his future "gauleiters". If the paintings, as many think, formed part of magical rites which conferred on the huntsmen particular powers over animals, their inaccessibility might itself have been a test of prowess.

The people of the Dordogne are nearly all peasants, they do not emigrate like the Auvergnats but remain on the land; they are sober, honest and hardworking nor have they yet been much affected by the spread of tourism or by contact with the foreigner. The whole region was one of the fairest provinces of the old feudalism of the Languedoc and contact with the North has not benefited it. The English or rather the Anglo-Normans brought the ravages of the Hundred Years' War whose vestiges remain in ruined castles and regular bastides; the Albigensian Crusade enabled the northern French to sack all the treasures of the castles where troubadours and courts of love had flourished. There is little architecture of the Renaissance, of the 17th and 18th centuries; great families like the Turennes and Noailles moved north and built elsewhere. The whole of this "other château country" would have fallen into decay were it not for a movement back to the great castles with their wonderful outlooks which comes from the rich world of 19th-century Paris looking for summer enchantments. It is to Parisians that we owe the saving of so many fine buildings, like Bretenoux and Montal. If exchange restrictions are ever lifted, there remain any amount of delicious, if ramshackle, small houses to be acquired for a thousand pounds or two where writers, painters, retired people or refugees from our climate can enjoy a warmer version of English rural life in fertile surroundings. The cost of living is much lower here than in the South of France, the Pays Basque or the coastal regions. Everything grows here and ripens but the cooking is apt to be monotonous. There are all the dishes with truffles as an ingredient, but one gets tired of goose and chicken, and the spectacular *lièvre à la royale* is hard to come by. Sea-food is sadly lacking and one must remember that the higher



Robert Pauc

*"There is a profusion of . . . dovecotes" in the valley of the Dordogne: this one stands under the castle walls at Beynac*

Dordogne, under the patronage of Fénelon, whose château is midway between Sarlat and Souillac, is, apart from the valley, an austere and infertile region, very different from the lower river, with its *primeurs* and vineyards, its shad and salmon, whose presiding genius is Montaigne.

The most interesting city of the department is certainly Périgueux, which adds Byzantinism and Roman remains to the riches of the province. It has a château-country of its own to the north, with Brantôme and Bourdeilles, in the delicious valley of the Dronne, as members by courtesy of the Dordogne fraternity. But somehow it is to Beynac, Souillac or Les Eyzies that one is constantly returning, the evening *autorail* from Bordeaux or the *rapide* from Paris deposit one at the high station of Souillac and soon we are wandering under the planes in the main street, inspecting the two rival cafés and M. Couderc's tables opposite, surrounded by geraniums and oleanders in tubs. One English novelist has left, we hear with relief. Some Americans have arrived "*depuis l'article*"; it is not too hot and not too cold, there is still some of the old *eau de vie de prunes*, not too sweet, tomorrow we shall walk along the river, not too far, there is a one-towered farm to let at Meyronne, not too dear. "How shall I find words to describe my pleasure in this countryside," wrote Delacroix a hundred years ago, from the Château de Croze. "It is a mixture of all the sensations that are lovely and pleasant to our hearts and imaginations."

# The Ritual Hunt at Soa

by HARRY WILCOX

*White Stranger (Collins, 1949), a chronicle of six months spent among the Torajas of the Celebes highlands, was distinguished by a rare acuteness of perception and delicacy of feeling. Readers of that book will know how little "undeserved" was the privilege which its author mentions in his preface to the following account of an occasion belonging, as he says, to the youth of mankind*

ONE travels for certain satisfactions that can be sought in distant places. As a traveller and explorer in a very small way of business I have found that the reward of travel which seems to me the finest of all is one seldom acknowledged by travellers past or present.

The familiar delights of travel in space—the refreshment of alien culture, the spectacle of shores and jungles, peaks, deserts and rivers, which no eyes of our race may ever have seen before—they come second in my estimation to the satisfactions of travel in time, which can often be enjoyed upon the same occasions.

Not to be high-falutin', I spend as much time as I can with the sort of people we call savages because I like their company. But the chief delight their company brings me is the broad outline and the mass of detail it contributes towards filling in the almost empty canvas which is all that historians and prehistorians offer us as a portrait of our own remoter ancestors—the men and women, for instance, whose hearths glowed for centuries on the hilltops of Britain before our era opened.

A savage is a young man. Savages are young mankind. A picture of the youth of our own race that will not be too unreliable can surely be sketched from observation of the character and the daily life and the festivals of peoples who are still young.



One does not need to be a romantic to find an instinctive excitement in the dramas of savage life. There are, after all, many more centuries of 'savagery' than of 'civilization' (to use two very slippery terms) in the make-up of any of us.

Invariably when I take part in one of these primitive dramas I am troubled by a sense of undeserved privilege. It seems to me a great pity, for example, that no more than two or three Europeans besides myself have ever attended the ritual hunt at Soa.

\* \* \* \* \*

The small tribe of Soa have built their villages around outcrops in the plateau of Central Ngada in the west-central sector of the East Indonesian island of Flores. They appear to be the earliest of all the strangely assorted peoples of Flores and their traditional way of life remains vivid and vigorous despite the existence of a Roman Catholic mission-post overlooking their chief villages.

The plateau of Central Ngada, formerly fertile, has lost its fertility in centuries of struggle with Nature and Man. Nature has inflicted six months of unfailling total drought every year and Man has destroyed the soil's ability to withstand the ravages of drought by burning the forests so regularly that they have now disappeared. The slopes are covered today with only a coarse weed-grass and scored with the deep wounds of gully erosion.

The tragic part is that the tribes of Ngada have burnt their forests to death over the centuries in the passionate belief that fire alone can end the drought each year and restore fertility.

The people of Soa hold a very small area of remaining fertility and raise crops of rice, maize and vegetables that keep them probably the healthiest folk in Flores. But they, too, have a deep belief in the power of fire to bring back the fertility which seems so obviously to have been killed each year by the pitiless parching winds that blow for many months from the deserts of Australia. For them fertility—of field, beast or mankind



*Every year the people of Soa hold a ritual hunt to restore the fertility of fields, beasts and mankind. The night before the hunt the men of each clan move into enclosures, known as lokas. Sitting rigidly in a circle, they keep a silent vigil till dawn. (Right) The clan's male ancestral spirit resides in a horned wooden post*

—is restored each year by the faithful observance of a ritual hunt in a sacred grove which is ceremonially consumed by sacred fire.

When I rode over the mountains to Soa preparations for the ritual hunt, which is held four days after the full harvest moon, were almost complete. Since the moon first appeared the tribe had observed forms of fasting, eating only austere food prepared and eaten separately by each sex and denying themselves sexual enjoyment. The men and boys had largely retired from their homes in the megalithic walled villages to live in their *lokas*, small enclosures belonging to the males of each family group formed around palm-trees from which the wine they drink daily is collected. There they were making the bamboo water-containers which each girl and woman of the tribe would carry to the hunt for the refreshment of husband, son, brother or fiancé.

Outside the village of Soa other and far more elaborate preparations had been made. A certain family there lies for all time under an ancient curse. It condemns them all after death to be buried naked, unless they have taken part in a great propitiatory feast called a *feka* during life. The *feka* is held once in a generation and by great good fortune the second one in this century was held during my short stay among the people of Soa.

Why a naked burial should be a fate of such horror I could not discover. At first I assumed the explanation must be linked with the custom of a tribe in another part of Flores whose richly woven sarongs contain in every case a certain strip of pattern which is the emblem or signature of the family group. They are buried in these sarongs so that on their entry into paradise their ancestors may recognize them and welcome them. To be an



*All photographs by the author*

individual without relatives is the supreme earthly misfortune in the eyes of many Indonesian peoples and would turn paradise itself into dust and ashes.

But the Soanese, I was told, are buried in plain white cloths and the old chiefs swore that it had always been so. To be sure, nudity among the living is considered most unseemly by many races of the archipelago, but such intense dread of a nude burial is mystifying. The accursed clan, at any rate, go to vast pains to avert it. The feast consumes tremendous quantities of food, so only after record harvests can it ever be considered. It imposes on the members of the clan, from babies to ancients, an intricate system of duties and taboos which places them temporarily so far outside the normal world of mankind that they have to build themselves a forbidden enclosure which it would be sudden death for any other Soa



*One clan at Soa lives under an ancient curse: unless its members take part in a feast, held once—*

man to enter.

Against my will, I was taken into the forbidden enclosure by the Roman Catholic priest, who ignores tribal taboos. Behind the bamboo walls were low huts, in one of which a small boy sprawled asleep in the dust, looking like a human sacrifice. There were high posts hung with sacred objects, all of them closely connected with rain and fertility in tribal lore—banana-flowers, woven wallets decorated with soot and white chicken-

feathers, bamboos of water, frail swords of obvious antiquity. There were storehouses of immense quantities of rice and other foods. Standards and banners delicately woven of bamboo and straw stirred in the parched breeze: other posts displayed rows of the jaws of sacrificed boars. The forbidden people, as they are called in their days of seclusion, were eating with strained expressions, strained because it was evil rice they were eating. This is rice prepared by





—each generation, and called a feka, they are condemned to be buried naked, a fate regarded with horror. In a special enclosure forbidden to other clans (opposite) they display their most powerful fertility-magic on high posts hung about with sacred objects. The enclosure's atmosphere is uneasy: (above) a child asleep looks like a small human sacrifice. (Left) Women of the accursed clan dress their hair in a peculiar style for the ceremony



*The men of a Soa family dance singing to the hunt from the grove of sugar-palms which is their ancestral club-house: "there were carols to the hunting dogs, anthems to ancestors and tribal warrior-heroes, extempore snatches on the subject of village jokes or quarrels, even one, I believe, on my visit"*



magicians in a certain way whereby it becomes powerfully charged with malevolent magic. If, for instance, a Soa man has a crop of tempting fruit approaching ripeness he may get a magician to prepare a small wallet of evil rice: nobody would dare to take fruit from a tree from which the wallet hung.

To eat evil rice would drive any Soa man insane in an hour; yet so far removed from the world of normal mankind are the forbidden people in those days that their daily food is the forbidden rice.

The camp of the forbidden people was a place in which I found it impossible to breathe normally. Far different were the lokas, where I was made most pleasantly welcome. In each of these groves of sugar-palms from half-a-dozen to a score of the male members of a family, from circumcised boys to wiry ancients, were gathered, gossiping, drinking, preparing food and eating and making the water-containers for the hunt. The atmosphere was friendly and club-like. No woman is ever allowed to enter a loka, except on the night following the ritual hunt. Though I was known to be the guest of the missionary, I was warmly invited to return to several lokas after the hunt and join the party, which I gathered would be unrestrained.

The air of expectancy on this eve of the hunt was like a fuse burning swiftly towards an explosive charge. At midday the elders with gentle firmness asked me to leave the village, for their vigil was beginning, and I was asked particularly not to approach any loka next morning until they had withdrawn from it.

Only babies and the two Europeans, the Dutch priest and myself, slept that night in Soa. In the houses the women and small children kept a silent vigil: in the lokas the menfolk watched in a circle, sitting rigidly so that their bodies from the waist downwards never once stirred. For the sleepers, though, the awakening was early.

The mission-post is built on an old cliff-top stronghold above a collection of the largest Soa villages. On previous mornings I had been roused by the vociferous crowing of a thousand cocks, a wonderful chorus echoing so powerfully from the cliffs that one could understand the belief of several Indonesian peoples that it is that chorus, and that alone, which brings back the sun every morning. But on this morning of the hunt, long before the cocks woke, the children of Soa began singing the tribe's ancestral hunting song.

It was a thrilling awakening. The elementally simple melody, with its urgent rhythm, sung *prestissimo* and with immense attack,

echoed back and forth for more than an hour before dawn, sung by different groups of children down the cliffside. The cocks soon joined in and immediately after sunrise, their vigil over, the men of Soa began to sing. Rising slowly on their cramped legs, they moved in silence and backwards out of their lokas and outside sprang into the air with roaring bursts of song. There were carols to the hunting dogs, anthems to ancestors and tribal warrior-heroes, extempore snatches on the subject of village jokes or quarrels, even one, I believe, on my visit. The singing was of a deep and exultant power. Singers advanced in slow, dancing groups, waving their barbed spears as they descended the rocky paths. From above and below the anthems echoed. The whole tribe was singing.

In a large open space at the foot of the cliffs the people were assembling. From a bivouac emerged the gross and autocratic figure of the Rajah of Badjawa, to whom the Soanese are to some extent subject. Groups of women were appearing, dressed in the traditional hunting costume worn only on that day. A folded cloth, white for virgins and indigo for others, was placed on each carefully coiffured head and over it lay the strings of the water-container and the basket destined to receive any scraps of the flesh of the ritual kill secured later in the day. Here and there were groups of girls whose teeth had been newly filed and whose arms hung heavily at their sides owing to the monstrous weight of armlets of old brass. These were the year's brides, for the young Soanese mate on the night following the ritual hunt, so as to ensure a maximum hope of fertility.

A number of these brides were Christian converts and had been married in the past few days by the missionary, who knew that nothing would keep a betrothed couple apart on the night after the hunt. But notwithstanding all that was claimed for the Christian ceremony, not one of the couples would have dreamed of consummating their marriage before the hunt.

Normally unwed Soanese girls are forbidden to cover their bodies above the waist, but the hunting costume includes the matron's blouse for every member of the sex.

The landscape manifests one all-pervading motif: aridity. From the polished, ever-cloudless sky to the dry watercourses and the dead and mummified herbage underfoot all is pitifully dry. Into many of the tree-trunks arrows have been fired, one of a great number of magical rain-making procedures



*Alien authorities: the Rajah of Badjawa, whose dynasty has established sovereignty over the outlying Soanese; and the Roman Catholic missionary, to whose enlightened intervention the survival of the hunt is largely due*

were born. They advance towards us, in this supreme moment of their lives, with a slow and stately prancing, in total silence. The young man who leads them has a stripe of chicken's blood down his brow and nose. He and his kinsfolk hold the frail, ancient knives, tasselled with white chicken-feathers, and the family spears. They wave these slowly as they dance through the sunrise. Their women follow, one of them so old that she gasps painfully in the effort to prance in time with her sons and grandsons.

The tribesmen are a silent frieze of heads and barbed spear-points silhouetted against the vivid eastern sky. I feel it strange as a Westerner to be attending a social-religious occasion at sunrise. Western civilization has forgotten the rising of the sun and we seldom see it. But no other hour of day or night could be more fitting for this ceremony.

The origin of the hunt, which must be of great antiquity, is curiously explained by the tribesfolk. The ancestor and ancestress of the tribe, they say, were once attacked in the forest by a buck and a boar. The ritual hunt is the tribe's revenge for this affront. That is all. It seems an unimpressive foundation for so impressive a tradition.

practised by the Soanese. The soil the Soa folk are dancing upon is as dry as the crater of Mount Ambulombo, one of the many active volcanoes of Flores, whose august cone dominates the south-eastern horizon. The homeland of the Soanese is famished and desperate for rain and this morning the tribesfolk are about to mobilize their triumphant magic to restore their dying soil to life.

Now the prodigious cockcrow is drowned under the songs and cries and chatter of the assembled tribe and the occasional reports from oil-wad bamboo cannons. Cockatoos and parrots have flown off in alarm. Hundreds of hunting dogs mill about the hoofs of two or three hundred small horses. As the crowds descend to the enclosure of the forbidden people the upper cliffs are left silent and as soon as we are all massed at a respectful distance from the enclosure all songs cease and a new pitch of expectancy is reached.

After a short wait the accursed clansmen are seen, dancing out of their enclosure, free at last of the curse under which they

Between the villages and the sacred wood a fire-saw of bamboo eight feet high has been set up, with tinder-dry straw stuffing the crosspiece. The feka people dance to the fire-saw, which is then uprooted and carried, like a savage crucifix, to a corner of the wood. There two men make fire with the fire-saw, the oldest method of making flame. Friction ignites a strand of straw stretched across a hole scraped in a length of bamboo. It smoulders and is blown into flame. Everybody withdraws and an ignited brand is thrown into the silent forest.

It is a small patch of secondary jungle, perhaps seven or eight acres. As it burns a buck must be flushed and must be killed by the men of Soa to ensure the end of drought





*Soa brides, some Christians, in their hunting livery, suffer formidable discomforts : their prodigiously heavy arm-ornaments of brass ; painful newly filed teeth ; and a raging thirst (they are not permitted to drink until the ritual beast is killed)*

and the return of life and fertility to their land. The excitement as the forest is ignited is convulsive. The tribesfolk have split up into groups to picket the spots at which the ritual quarry is considered most likely to appear. There is a radiant animation about them all. This is not a sporting event: it is a sacrament of love and faith.

The forest is so brown and arid that it seems already to have been burnt. And so it has, of course. For months it has been burnt and shrivelled by unmasked suns and bone-dry desert winds. But it is still as inflammable as celluloid. When the brand is tossed in there is an explosion and a *crescendo* hiss like a violent hailstorm.

The folk of Soa—with their ancestors crowding round them, as always at a savage festival—hold their breath. Groups of men and dogs vanish into the *lalang* grass edging

the wood; it is so high that only their moving spear-tops can be seen. Little boys climb outlying trees as lookouts, watched by anxious mothers: tribesmen have often been burned to death in the fever of the hunt.

The Catholic priest of Soa rides forward with his spear at the ready. It is largely due to his enlightened championship that the hunt survives. In view of the tragic ruin of the soil of Ngada by the various tribes' passionate belief in the necessity for fire, the authorities punish severely any village found guilty of causing a hill or forest fire. Stubborn attempts to include the Soa ritual hunt in the ban were successfully resisted by the priest, who has affection for such traditions of the tribe as do not openly conflict with Christian dogma. He is well aware of the powerful social invigoration and refreshment that the occasion provides.

*Women of the cursed family of Soa watching the fire being made which is to drive the ritual buck out of the forest for the hunt. Their elaborately dressed hair is adorned with bones and feathers*







*The accursed clansmen dance out of their enclosure into the sight of mankind, "free at last of the curse under which they were born". They carry ancient swords, spears, and emblems of fertility*

The fire roars through the parched wood like the striding of giants, so loud that we have to shout above it, so terrifying that our horses scream. Smoke dims the slanting sunshine. Five, ten minutes go by with only a short false alarm or two, no wild outcry that would signal the ritual beast's dash for the open. I have been told of the frantic scenes at the kill, of the hundred knives slashing to snatch scraps of the fertility-ensuring flesh, the inevitable wounds, the triumphal return with the head to the loka of the hunter whose spear first struck the buck, the night-long feasting, dancing and lovemaking.

The first signal of disaster is given by the Rajah of Badjawa. With a sudden exclamation he lowers his spear, wheels his small stallion and rides back towards the villages. He is a hunter of renown, with an uncanny understanding of the instincts of game. He has decided that the forest, though so far only half burnt, is empty.

Dismay like a cold current runs round the blazing wood. Huntsmen on guard over exit tracks, tribeswomen suckling babies, small boys poisoning bamboo spears, all feel the chill of an unprecedented dread as the rajah's overfed figure bounces away from the hunt:



*The tribal seers of Soa have chosen as sacred a small area of forest in which the ritual quarry is to be hunted, so as to ensure the end of drought and the revival of the soil. The tribesfolk split up into parties and these, each with a different idea as to the most likely spot for the beast to appear, hurry off to picket it*





*No beast is found: instead of the triumphant, chanting return the tribesmen creep fearfully homeward in silent groups or singly, to wonder whether their parched, dead land will ever live again*

the chill of disaster.

The royal instinct was sound. For the first time in all the memory of the tribe the ritual beast was not found in the sacred wood. We waited perhaps another hour, while the rest of the forest fell before the fire and stubborn hopes were slowly beaten into despair. A pale bride, with throat parched and hands swollen, sank down and freed her arm of the burden of the enormous armlet. Dispirited hunters began plodding off in the wake of the rajah, dazed by the swift plunge from ecstatic expectancy to dread.

No songs. No dancing. No bridal night for brides and grooms. And now no rain to revive the soil for planting, no fruit of tree or womb.

The elders and magicians gathered for grave consultations, watched with anxious

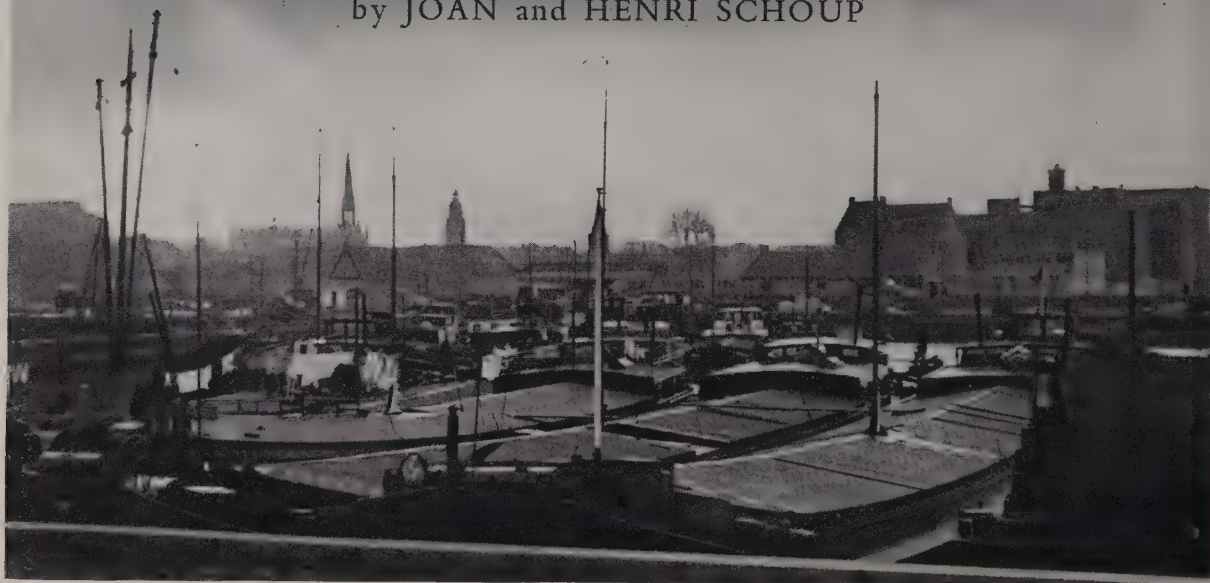
trust by the tribesfolk, over whom the threat of annihilation hung as close as the pall of smoke from the ruined forest.

In this atmosphere of heartbreak I left Soa a couple of hours later. That was before the tribal seers had announced that another small wood could with propriety be burned and hunted next morning after another night of vigil. I was to hear some weeks afterwards that the buck had then been found and I was sad not to have taken part in the festival of reprieve.

But that afternoon, riding disconsolately back over the mountains, what I had glimpsed that morning seemed to me to have been nothing more nor less than a page of the human past. Our past. My past. This, more than anything else, makes the ritual hunt at Soa so moving a memory.

# Life on Dutch Waterways

by JOAN and HENRI SCHOUP



P. H. van der Weel

*Barges massed in one of the basins in the port of Rotterdam*

A FEW days ago we were entertained to tea in a Dutch home. Immaculate white curtains hung at the shining windows. The inevitable potted plants stood here and there. The stove burned brightly in a corner, and a huge ornate lamp hung over the table. But the room in which we sat talking to the father of the family and five of his eight children was unbelievably tiny. Flanking it were two bedrooms, scarcely more than cupboards in the wall, and a kitchen big enough for one adult or two children. For we were on board the *Ahead*—a 244-ton lighter—floating home of Skipper Van Oost, a Dutchman whose family for generations have lived on the water.

Like her husband, Mrs Van Oost looks younger than her years. Small, dark and neat, a perfect skipper's wife, she makes the best possible use of the cramped living-space on board. Luckier than many, she possesses an electric washing machine, which is in an outside wash-house. Electricity is generated by the ship's engine; gas for lighting and cooking comes in containers; and drinking water is brought alongside by special tankships. The skipper complained bitterly that these only operated in the big harbours, and even there the service is irregular and inadequate. Sometimes skippers have to wait

with a white flag at their mast—meaning "We want water"—for days on end. *En route*, between the large harbours, water has to be brought from ashore in buckets, unless there is spare space for a watertank on board.

The tiny wheelhouse of the *Ahead* which serves as waiting room and entrance hall, was almost completely filled by the gleaming polished steering wheel, and a steep cabin stairway led to the living quarters below. Not a square inch of space is wasted, but even so it was hard to see where all the children fitted in.

The skipper's eldest son was married a few months ago, and now has his own barge—without an engine. So he is towed along by father and the two barges travel everywhere together. A glance into its interior was enough to show that these were the quarters of a newly married couple. Everything shone and gleamed with cleanliness. The little bedroom was full of surprise cupboards, all of which could serve as beds, and a tiny space above the main bed would make a baby's cot. In a corner hung the bridal bouquet which, according to Dutch tradition, is always kept by the bed long after the flowers have withered and the ribbon faded.

His second son had an accident to his foot, so now works on land. His third, aged six-

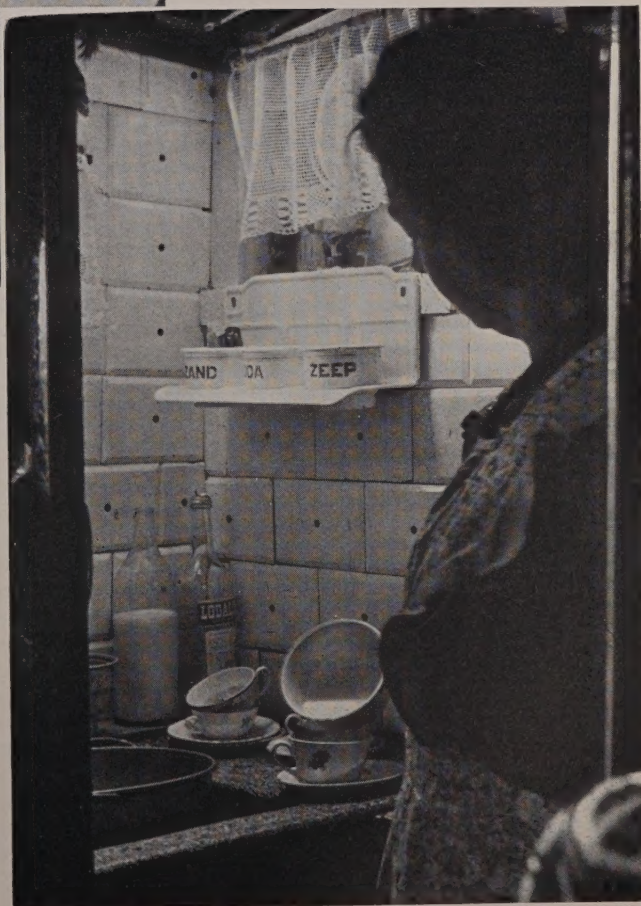




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Skipper Van Oost at the wheel of his barge Ahead which is both his home and his livelihood. Dutch barge-dwellers, as do the English, make their surroundings bright and cheerful, and even the wheelhouse, "almost completely filled by the gleaming polished steering wheel", is adorned with plants in pots. (Below) The skipper's wife in her tiny kitchen, which makes those in modern flats look vast by comparison, prepares meals for a large family. To a land-lubber it might seem impossible to fit parents and children into such small quarters, yet the—

—Ahead's previous owner had eleven children and found room for all! This surprising feat of compression is achieved by combining the ordered tidiness of the Dutch hausfrau with a cheerful acceptance of a necessarily haphazard existence



P. H. van der Weel





H. Dennis Jones

*Coal-barges unloading from a canal in the old part of Amsterdam. Dutch waterways such as this are in effect an extension of the adjacent streets rather than a separate system of communication*

teen, acts as mate and sleeps in the mate's bunk in the bow of the barge. Two daughters are at a special boarding school for barge children in Amsterdam, and the youngest are still at home.

Skipper Van Oost is a typical tramper, as are most of the 70,000 canal-dwellers in the Netherlands. He goes where the goods are needed, and he takes with him all he possesses. His principals may order him to carry a load of fertilizer to Arnhem along the Rhine. In Arnhem he may discover that another merchant wants him to take timber to Belgium and return with cement. After this he may head for Germany with a load of iron ore. One or two addresses or an occasional *poste restante* letter are his only contacts with the land. Though seldom having any command of foreign languages these barge owners trust themselves and their families as far as the Pyrenees or Strasbourg.

Holland would be unthinkable without water transport. Its rivers and canals amount to a total length almost as great as that of its roads. The 17,000 barges on these waters—from the huge 2000-ton Rhine barge to the humble 30- or 50-ton wooden boat which the Frisians call "Tjalk"—are doing a flourishing trade at the moment and closely follow in

the wake of Holland's industrialization and the revival of Germany.

Canal-dwellers in Holland form a class apart, which is largely due to their way of living, separated from the rest of the population; but is also, to a certain extent, a result of past circumstances. Some twenty years ago the skipper-owner had to depend entirely on his contacts on land, and his luck, to get cargo. The main centre where deals were made was the public house, situated on a convenient crossing of waterways. The pub owner established contact between skipper and merchant and was an indispensable go-between. Skippers were bound to be on good terms with him. This "pub-freighting" put the skipper entirely in the publican's hands, he ran into debt, and all efforts on land to get cargo went naturally with heavy drinking. This situation changed in 1933 when "freighting commissariats" were established on advice of a government commission. These commissariats keep lists of available cargo, on which the skipper can put his name. It is a case of first come, first served, and whoever has his name on top of the list gets the first commission. Thus a fair distribution is ensured but the bad experiences of the past have left their traces, and a faint distrust of the "people on





H. Dennis Jones

*The main arterial canal between Amsterdam and Utrecht. Barges in Holland carry nearly twice as much as the railways and can easily compete with road haulage where bulk transport is concerned*

land" persists. This, however, has not prevented them from borrowing ideas and they have organized themselves on very modern lines.

By her geographical position Holland is an ideal country for transport on water, for unlike their colleagues in England, barge owners here can easily extend their activities beyond the frontier on the Rhine and the Meuse and, indeed, their trade would be poor if that were not possible. As soon as there is a slump in inland transport skippers turn to the big rivers. The Rhine, moreover, has an additional attraction because government maximum prices, fixed for water transport on the canals and other rivers, do not apply here. The Rhine has an exceptional status thanks to the Treaty of Mannheim of 1871, which stated: "The Rhine shall be free." At this moment the Rhine Treaty is again subject to sharp controversy. Holland, which has a larger Rhine fleet than all the other Rhine countries put together, resents protective practices of the German government in favour of the much smaller German Rhine fleet. German skippers, when they are in Holland, can take in cargo whenever they can get it, even for transport within Holland, in accordance with the proclaimed freedom of

the Rhine. Germany, on the other hand, has always pursued a very protectionist practice towards all foreign shipping within her own frontiers, so a Dutch skipper was excluded from German inland Rhine transport. This restriction has now been partly lifted by an agreement which, in the eyes of Dutch skippers, is still highly unsatisfactory. At present they are allowed to carry cargo on the German Rhine but only if they have been commissioned by a German firm, or a Dutch firm with a branch in Germany. This agreement, the Dutch say, puts them entirely under German control. So water transport circles clamour for freedom on the Rhine in Germany equal to that granted to Germans on the Dutch Rhine.

There is a marked difference between the specialized Rhine skipper with his barge of perhaps 2000 tons and the others. Most Rhine skippers—mainly Roman Catholics—employ hired labour which brings them into the category of factory owners or other business men on land. At the other end there are the small skippers in the northern provinces—mainly Protestants—who often operate just a small wooden ship with an old Ford engine and find work during the "campaign months" carrying sugar beet to the factories



and potatoes to the flour mills. Waterways in the north of the Netherlands are mostly obsolete and shallow which makes heavy loads impossible. There is severe competition from road transport. Some of these small skippers collect sand and gravel from the rivers and carry it to the buyers. Thus they combine the work of transporting and selling. For these people life is extremely insecure. In winter most of them take jobs on land as unskilled labour in factories.

Between these two extremes are the 'middle-class' barge owners with ships of 300 tons or more, equipped with diesel engines. They have access to the inland canals but expand to the Rhine and Meuse as well, carrying cargo abroad.

A third section of water transport operates a regular service from town to town. This is the haulage business on water with several ships running on a fixed time-schedule, the cheapest transport for crates, furniture, small cargoes from wholesalers to shopkeepers, and the like. Skippers on these barges live on land and do not own their ships. When railway transport had been brought to a stop in the country by September 1944, this regular ship service kept the west of Holland provided with food as far as possible. After the liberation these boat services catered for passengers as well, as the Dutch railways had most of their rolling stock destroyed, and for a few months in 1945 life was back in the days of the 17th century when the traveller embarked at The Hague to make a day's journey of the forty miles to Amsterdam.

One of the government's main concerns is for the schooling of the canal-dwellers' children. Owing to the rambling life of their parents, school education has always been a major problem and will continue to be one. The general obligation of sending a child to school from his sixth till his fourteenth year cannot be imposed upon these parents, but schools of two types are provided. In all towns situated near the main waterways schools take barge children for as long as their parents are awaiting new cargo, sometimes only three or four days. Some three years ago concerted efforts were made to devise a unified system of teaching. Children are provided with a file in which the subject-matter to be learnt is divided into 26 tasks. The child shows his file to the teacher, who initials a task as soon as it has been completed. This makes it possible for the teacher in the next school to see how the child has progressed, in order that he can continue. The child is put in a special class and the file system makes it possible for the teacher to give individual

attention. This method, of course, can hardly reach further than the three basic subjects: reading, writing and arithmetic.

There is practically no way of controlling whether the child is actually being sent to school when the parents are waiting in harbour, and the education is bound to be haphazard and inadequate. As most skippers themselves have had a very limited education they sometimes do not attach much importance to schooling possibilities. Therefore another attempt was made to solve the problem and special boarding schools were founded. Of course, here as in most fields of activity in Holland, religious divisions and sub-divisions play their due part. Not only are the schools divided between Protestant and Catholic, but the Protestant section is itself divided between the true Calvinists and the more moderate Protestants. Therefore in Rotterdam there are boarding schools which cater for all denominations, so the Calvinist parents run no risk of seeing their children play football on Sunday.

Children can be sent to these schools from the age of eight and stay till they are twelve. In those four years they get normal elementary education which at other schools is extended over six years. The government subsidizes parents who cannot afford the full payment for their child, and last year the maximum government allowance was twelve shillings per child per week. There is a tendency among skippers to want to have the education of their children made compulsory because that would mean a shouldering by the government of the whole burden of boarding school education. On the other hand, sending a child to school means a distinct disadvantage because he or she comes back as a 'land child' having lost all knowledge of the work on board, and usually the father relies on his adult children to work with him or continue his work. School authorities told us that surprisingly few children wish at the end of their schooldays to learn a trade other than their father's calling.

Recently, the barge people themselves took a great step forward in an effort to make the general population more familiar with their way of life. Quite spontaneously, their own organization arranged holiday trips on barges—ordinary barges, temporarily converted, with sleeping quarters for thirty people—on which, for a moderate sum, anyone can take a most unusual holiday along the waterways of Holland, Belgium and Germany. This is, perhaps, the clearest indication of a genuine desire to break away from a traditional seclusion.